

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-04

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 017883

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, ET, US

SUBJECT: REPRESENTATION TO FONMIN KIFLE RE INSECURITY OF
AMERICANS IN ETHIOPIA

REFS: (A) ADDIS 0720, (B) ADDIS 0646, (C) ADDIS 0223

1. AMBASSADOR HUMMEL AND AF/E DIRECTOR COOTE USED OCCA-
SION OF CALL ON FONMIN KIFLE AT HIS RESIDENCE JANUARY 22
TO EXPRESS SERIOUS CONCERN AT THREAT WHICH ANTI-FOREIGN
AND ANTI-AMERICAN ARTICLES IN GOVT-CONTROLLED MEDIA POSED
TO SAFETY OF BOTH OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE AMERICANS IN
ETHIOPIA.

2. DEPT REPS INDICATED THAT USG WAS WELL AWARE OF CHANG-
ING SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA, AND ATTENDANT DIFFICULTIES, AND
IN FACT USG FAVORED SOME OF REFORMS WHICH PMAC ATTEMPTING
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TO EFFECT. WE REALIZED TOO THAT IN THIS PERIOD OF CHANGE

NEW MILITARY REGIME WOULD BE CONSTANTLY ON LOOKOUT FOR INDICATIONS OF U.S. ATTITUDES TOWARD ETHIOPIA. CONVERSELY, USG EQUALLY INTERESTED IN ANY ACTIONS OR STATEMENTS OF PMAC AS INDICATIVE OF FUTURE RELATIONSHIP THEY WISHED TO HAVE WITH USG. IN THIS CONNECTION, DEPT WAS HIGHLY PLEASED WITH ASSURANCES WHICH FONMIN HAD GIVEN THAT PMAC RECIPROCATED OUR DESIRE FOR CONTINUED FRIENDLY AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONS.

3. IN VIEW THESE ASSURANCES, WE WERE SURPRISED AND DISTURBED BY VERY CRITICAL ARTICLES IN ETHIOPIAN PRESS WHICH OBVIOUSLY DIRECTED AT USG. MOREOVER, SUCH ITEM OF IMPORTANCE AND INTEREST TO EPMG AS NOMINATION OF NEW AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO ETHIOPIA WAS COMPLETELY IGNORED BY ETHIOPIAN MEDIA.

4. DEPT REPS REVIEWED SPECIFIC PRESS ARTICLES AND STONING INCIDENTS, AND DESCRIBED MOUNTING UNCERTAINTY, INSECURITY, AND IN SOME CASES EVEN FEAR, AMONG NUMBER OF AMERICANS. ALSO MENTIONED GROWING FEELING OF HOSTILITY AND HARRASSMENT BY ETHIOPIANS ON PART OF PCV'S IN PROVINCES NORTH OF ADDIS. IF PRESENT SITUATION REMAINED UNCHECKED, THERE WAS DISTINCT POSSIBILITY THAT FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY MANY OF THESE PCV'S MIGHT WISH AND EVEN DEMAND TO LEAVE COUNTRY. SUCH DEPARTURE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE WIDELY PUBLICIZED IN U.S. PRESS AND, THROUGH NO FAULT OF USG, RESULTANT UNFAVORABLE PUBLIC OPINION HERE COULD CREATE PROBLEMS FOR US IN OUR CONTINUING EFFORTS TO PROVIDE MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. SINCE ALL PCV'S WERE IN COUNTRY ON ETHIOPIAN GOVT'S INVITATION, WE SUGGESTED IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF EPMG COULD TAKE SOME REMEDIAL ACTION, SUCH AS ISSUANCE OF STATEMENT EITHER IN ADDIS OR THROUGH APPROPRIATE REGIONAL OFFICIALS, REAFFIRMING ITS DESIRE TO RETAIN PEACE CORPS PROGRAM. SUCH STATEMENT COULD BE HELPFUL IN REDUCING CURRENT TENSIONS AND ASSURING GREATER SECURITY FOR PCV'S.

5. KIFLE WAS SYMPATHETIC. HE AGREED ON DESIRABILITY OF SOME ACTION BY EPMG TO IMPROVE SITUATION BEFORE IT GOT OUT
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OF CONTROL. HE SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO PROBLEM AS SOON AS HE RETURNED AND TRY TO BE HELPFUL. AT SAME TIME HE REITERATED THAT THIS WAS A PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT PERIOD IN ETHIOPIA, AND EVEN THOUGH EPMG HAD BEST OF INTENTIONS IT MIGHT NOT ALWAYS BE ABLE TO CONTROL SITUATION. HE HOPED THAT USG WOULD BE UNDERSTANDING AND NOT ACT PRECIPITOUSLY TO DETRIMENT OUR MUTUAL INTERESTS. DEPT REPS NOTED THAT THIS WAS A TWO-WAY RESPONSIBILITY, TO WHICH

KIFLE READILY AGREED.

6. WE SUGGESTED THAT KIFLE INFORM HIS GOVT OF USG'S CONCERN RE INSECURITY OF AMERICANS PRIOR TO HIS RETURN TO ETHIOPIA. HE SUGGESTED THAT EMBASSY SHOULD MAKE APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATIONS WITH EPMG, PRIOR HIS RETURN.

7. IN THIS CONNECTION DEPT NOTES WITH APPROVAL REPRESENTATIONS REPORTED ADDIS 0829. SUGGEST YOU FOLLOW-UP DEPT'S

REPRESENTATION TO KIFLE BUT THAT YOU LIMIT SUCH REPRESENTATION TO APPROPRIATE HIGH LEVEL MOFA AND/OR MOD.

8. FYI: DEPT DOES NOT THINK THAT EPMG IS LIKELY TO ISSUE PUBLIC STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF PC PROGRAM. NEVERTHELESS WE HAVE MADE SPECIFIC REQUEST TO EPMG FOR SOME TYPE OF REMEDIAL ACTION TO CHECK A DETERIORATING SITUATION. SHOULD EPMG FAIL TO TAKE ANY ACTION AND SOME PCV'S WERE TO LEAVE, WE WOULD AT LEAST HAVE MADE PRIOR EFFORT WITH EPMG TO PREVENT SUCH EVENTUALITY. END FYI INGERSOLL

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